

Notes and Observations

A POSSIBLE CASE OF DIPTEROUS ECTOPARASITES CAUSING THE DEATH OF NESTLING HOUSE MARTINS.—During August 1969, I received a letter from Mr J. R. Clay of Dudleston Manor Farm, Dudleston, near Ellesmere, Salop, requesting the identification of an insect which he had taken from a dying House Martin, *Delichon urbica* (L.). On examination, I found it to be a specimen of the louse-fly, *Stenepteryx hirundinis* L. (Diptera: Hippoboscidae), a common ectoparasite of martins and swallows.

As Mr Clay mentioned that the House Martins nesting around his farm were dying, and deserting their nests, I asked him for further particulars. He subsequently informed me that he actually found two nestlings dying on the ground, apparently having fallen from their nests, and that he removed five of these flies from each of them. Both birds died shortly afterwards. Furthermore, Mr Clay told me that he had 21 occupied nests at the front of his farmhouse and 25 at the rear. A few days after he found the second bird dying, he noticed that the adult House Martins had deserted the latter group of nests, and, on investigation, discovered that about half of the 25 nests contained dead nestlings or adults (mostly the former) in them, the number in each nest varying from 1 to 4.

Unfortunately, Mr Clay was not able to check these other dead birds for parasites, but in view of this remarkably high mortality and the high number of Hippoboscids he found on the two dying birds beneath the nests, it seems to me that this may have been a case of a heavy infestation of ectoparasites having been responsible. The fact that the group of nests at the front of the farmhouse were apparently unaffected would appear to rule out starvation due to a spell of unfavourable weather reducing the availability of food to the young. In any case, that would not satisfactorily explain the deaths of the adults found in the nests.

Such examples of blood-sucking ectoparasites causing the death of their hosts are rare, but it is known that the depredations of *S. hirundinis* can sometimes so weaken martins and swallows that they become incapable of flight.—J. F. BURTON, BBC Natural History Unit, Bristol 8. 17.xii.1970.

AN UNUSUAL LATE BROOD OF NEPTICULA ANOMALELLA GOEZE.—On 4th October this year, I inspected a small and nondescript rose bush in my garden for Nepticulid mines and found two, probably *N. fletcheri* Tutt. This bush usually has three or four